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NEWS RELEASE

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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced the return today of a 29-count indictment against Joseph McMurtrie, age 25, of Newport News, Virginia, charging him with various offenses involving wire fraud, mail fraud, and money laundering.

The indictment alleges that from December 12, 2003, through July 3, 2004, using Ebay and Yahoo Auctions, McMurtrie listed for sale various items including computer laptops and car stereo equipment. McMurtrie posted these items for sale using various e-mail addresses and registration information including name, address, telephone number, internet protocol (IP) addresses, and bank account information.

Numerous victims purchased laptops and car audio equipment from McMurtrie through the auction web sites and sent him money using money orders and cashiers checks sent to various locations, including McMurtrie's residence. The victims described in the indictment, and other victims identified during the course of the investigation, received no product after sending funds or were sent car audio equipment of lesser value than what McMurtrie had auctioned on the Ebay and Yahoo Auction sites.

McMurtrie allegedly promoted the mail and wire fraud scheme by converting money orders and cashiers checks received from victims into currency through the America's Cash Express and Mr. Money Check Cashing located in Newport News, Virginia. Prior to identifying and dismantling McMurtrie's alleged fraudulent scheme, investigators identified 17 victims with losses of approximately \$17,000.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Newport News Police Department. Assistant United States Attorneys Howard J. Zlotnick is prosecuting the case for the United States.

(It should be noted that defendants are considered innocent until proven guilty.)